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**TESTIMONY OF P. JAMES DURM ON HB 5415
MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION
20 MARCH 2012**

I am P. James Durm, Supervisor of the Township of Moran. I appreciate this opportunity to address your Board regarding the adoption of HB 5415 to establish the Father Marquette National Memorial and Mackinac Straits Area Museum Advisory Board. I am unable to attend in person due to my responsibilities with the March Board of Review.

I am very supportive of this effort since I believe it provides the necessary governing organization required to restore this Park and Museum.

Before it burned in 2000, the Museum at the Father Marquette National Memorial was a very important cultural and historical center containing irreplaceable local artifacts. It served to educate our residents of their heritage and provided tourists an informative attraction to visit.

Three years ago a number of local residents came together to discuss ways to reverse the decline in our local economy. We agreed that the Father Marquette Park and Museum offered the best opportunity to restore and expand the tourist industry in our area.

Tourism remains our area's single largest employer. The location of the Father Marquette Park with access to I-75 and its existing infrastructure (water, sewer, walking trails and restroom facilities) make it an ideal tourist destination.

We are in the process of outlining a long-term (years and perhaps decades) long development plan for the Father Marquette Park and surrounding area. The area just west of the Father Marquette Park is an important Straits crossing point for oil, gas pipelines and electric cables.

These utilities and the City of St. Ignace own over 150 acres of vacant land adjacent to the Father Marquette Park and have expressed a willingness to Little Traverse Conservancy Executive Director Tom Bailey to discuss development of this area for public recreational uses. I have met with Tom Bailey and discussed expanding the Dark Sky Initiative to our side of the Mackinac Bridge. Our south facing views offer ideal unobstructed conditions for viewing many constellations that are sought after by amateur astronomers. Adjacent to these utility properties are over 250 acres of privately owned vacant property with the St. Ignace Public Golf Course to the north.

The City of St. Ignace and Moran Township are separated by I-75 with no safe pedestrian friendly crossing. Building a pedestrian bridge from the Welcome Center to the Father Marquette Park would link downtown St. Ignace to a major cultural and recreational development. Part of this development would include a bicycle path from downtown St. Ignace, crossing the pedestrian bridge and then following a circuitous route along Lake Michigan back to the City of St. Ignace. A pedestrian bridge would provide direct north and southbound access to I-75 increasing the patronage and profitability of the park. The Welcome Center currently provides promotional materials to north bound traffic only. A pedestrian bridge would also expand the Welcome Center's ability to promote northern Michigan to southbound traffic.

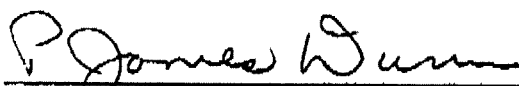
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A pedestrian bridge would also link the Straits State Park to the Father Marquette Park providing more recreational activities for campers and providing the Father Marquette Park and Museum with increased patronage and profitability.

The Father Marquette Park Committee realizes we lack the necessary expertise to put our many ideas into a working development. With that in mind, we have met with the Prima Civitas Foundation which is a non-profit economic and community development organization created by Michigan State University. The Prima Civitas Board has expressed an interest in helping us develop the Father Marquette Park. Their first step has been to put us in contact with the Engineering Society of Detroit, which is an organization established to promote engineering employment and community development. We will be meeting with ESDI on March 23, 2012 to see if their area of expertise is a good match for the development we are proposing.

Once again, I would like to express my appreciate for your efforts in pursuing HB 5415. This legislation will provide us with the governing authority we need to pursue our goals for this park.

I would be happy to provide any additional information or materials that you may consider helpful. I can be reached at anytime via the following:



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ATTACHMENT: GOOGLE MAP

Google maps father marquette national memorial

near St. Ignace, MI

FATHER MARQUETTE NATIONAL MEMORIAL

To see all the details that are visible on the screen, use the "Print" link next to the map.

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MBA BRIDGE VIEW PARK

STRAITS STATE PARK AND CAMPGROUND
MACKINAC BRIDGE

